



STORAGE NEWS

BENQ BURNING UP

BenQ has announced its first dual-layer external DVD burner. The USB2-connected EW164B will use BenQ's proprietary SolidBurn technology. This allows the drive to write to discs above their certified write speed. Maximum speeds for the drive are 16X for DVD+/-R, 8X DVD+RW and 6X DVD-RW, while +R DL is written at 8X and -R DL at 4X. The drive will be in European shops by the end of September at an as-yet undisclosed price.

TOSHIBA GOES HOLOGRAPHIC

Toshiba is one of several companies to invest in Optware, a company developing a holographic optical disc. Optware's Holographic Versatile Disc (HVD) is rumoured to hold more than 1TB of data, which is considerably more than the next generation of DVD discs such as Toshiba's own HD DVD. This is a strong indicator of the level of storage we can expect in the next-next generation of CD-sized discs.

PRETEC SUPER-SIZE SD CARD

Pretec has announced the world's largest Secure Digital (SD) card. The 4GB card has enough space for around 1,000 high-resolution, low-compression photos, and is top of the company's high-speed line. It will cost more than most digital cameras, however, at £400. It should be in shops in October.



REVIEW DVD WRITER

SONY DW-Q28A

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £34 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.sony.com



Like several other manufacturers, Sony has been quick to integrate DVD-R dual-layer writing into its new generation of DVD writers. The DVD-R DL format, like the DVD+R DL format, allows you to store up to 8.5GB on a single disc.

Sadly, although Sony's drive is marginally cheaper than the competition, it's also slower. As it can write to either of the two-layer formats at only 4X speed, it takes 26 minutes and 50 seconds

to fill a +R DL disc and 27 minutes and 50 seconds to fill a -R DL disc. This is significantly slower than the NEC ND-3540A, the two-layer burner recommended below. It takes just over six minutes to fill DVD+R and DVD-R discs, which is slower than NEC's drive.

David McKinnon



Inexpensive two-layer writer



Slower than the competition

SPECIFICATIONS Internal DVD+/-RW +/-DL drive, 16X DVD+R, 16X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 4X DVD+R DL, 4X DVD-R DL, 48X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM. Part code DW-Q28A

REVIEW DISK CADDY

ICYBOX IB-360

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £35 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.overclockers.co.uk

DETAILS www.raidsonic.de



If you have a spare hard disk, IcyBox's IB-360 caddy can turn it into an external disk. It can use any parallel ATA 3½" IDE hard disk. It connects to your PC via USB Hi-Speed and requires an external power brick, so it's not ideal for physically moving data between locations.

We used a 160GB Hitachi DeskStar hard disk to test the performance of the IcyBox. The data transfer rates were 25.17MB/s for large files and 8.76MB/s for small files, roughly 50 per cent

slower than when the drive was connected internally using a conventional parallel ATA interface. However, the overall speed of the drive is in line with other 3½" USB2-connected external hard disks.

The price difference between internal and external hard disks of the same capacity tends to be around £30 to £40, so buying the IcyBox and an internal drive will only save you a few pounds. If you already have an ATA drive from an old system, however, it's an inexpensive way to add external storage.

David McKinnon



Attractive; easy to assemble



Not quite the money saver you'd expect

SPECIFICATIONS External hard disk unit, external power supply, USB2 interface to computer, PATA interface to disk. Part code IB-360U-BL

HOTLIST DVD WRITER

NEC ND-3540A

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £35 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.microdirect.co.uk

DETAILS www.nec.co.uk



Although it doesn't have support for DVD-RAM, NEC's ND-3540A is the fastest of the latest-generation DVD writers. Impressive writing specifications are backed up by excellent performance. It took only 19 minutes to fill a double-layer disc and just over 20 minutes to fill a dual-layer disc, which for these 8.5GB discs amounts to a nearly 2GB/minute write speed. At this price, you won't find a faster writer.



SPECIFICATIONS 16X DVD+R, 16X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 6X DVD-R DL, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM. Part code ND-3540A

HOTLIST PORTABLE HARD DISK

WESTERN DIGITAL Passport 80GB

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £103 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.wdc.com



Western Digital's rubber-bottomed Passport is an excellent portable disk. It's a little bigger than a PDA and weighs just 238g, so it's easy to carry around. Inside is a 2½" hard disk that provides 80GB of storage. It connects via USB Hi-Speed and provides the kind of transfer speeds usual for such a disk: large files transfer at around 22MB/s and small files at 7MB/s. It's ideal as a second notebook hard disk or as portable file storage.



SPECIFICATIONS 80GB capacity, USB Hi-Speed interface, USB powered. Part code WDXML800UET

HOTLIST INTERNAL HARD DISK

SAMSUNG SpinPoint SP2504C

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £86 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.komplett.co.uk

DETAILS www.samsung.com



Samsung's SpinPoint SP2504C was easily the best hard disk in our recent Labs test (Shopper September 2005). It combines good value with cutting-edge technology. Its 250GB of storage is accessed through a SATA II interface with Native Command Queuing at a maximum transfer rate of 300MB/s. If you're looking for more internal storage and you have a free SATA connector, this is the best drive to buy.



SPECIFICATIONS 3½" internal hard disk, 250GB capacity, 232GB formatted capacity (NTFS), SATA 300 interface, 7200rpm spindle speed, 8MB cache. Part code SP2504C